

FARMERS' SONS.

[The following excellent story is from the New England Farmer.]

When a young man leaves his home in the country for a less desirable one in the city, or elsewhere, the inference, as a general thing, is either that he is "spoiled" by indulgence on the part of the parents, or by certain influences which may have fallen upon him, led to despise labor on a farm, and induced to seek a less laborious and more easy mode of life. That these are not the *only* causes which induce boys to leave a good home and farm, the following sketch may perhaps show.

"I am really very glad to see you, Mrs. Gove, this afternoon. Do you know that it is nearly a whole year since I've had this pleasure, and you my nearest neighbor?"

"I did not think it was so long, but—but, I have a great deal of care."

"Yes, you certainly must have. Let us take our work and sit on the piazza: it is much cooler there, and secluded from the sun."

"Can we see our meadow from there, Mrs. Norton?"

"Let me see—O, yes, very well."

"Mr. Gove, with the men and Billy, have gone down to the lower field fencing, and he wished me to have an eye on the meadow, as that fence is all down and our cattle are in the road. I see you have finished planting, Mrs. Norton. You have every thing done in season, and yet you never seem hurried, or fretted. You must take comfort."

"Why, as to that, we feel that there is nothing worth doing but is worth doing well; and feeling thus, we own but little land, a small farm compared with yours, and we find no difficulty in having our work done at the right time."

"Yes,—and I can hardly realize, Mrs. Norton, that this is the same place where I played, when a child, 'tis so changed, and so beautifully changed; these handsome trees—why in this very spot twenty years ago a sand bank 'twas, in which nothing grew but dock and tansey. I used to get the double tansey for grandmother, to color her cheese with. I am not surprised that my Billy should say, as he did to-day, that he was never so happy as when he was under the ash tree down by the spring. Really, Mrs. Norton, that is the only one near our house, and that is fast going to decay. You have vines, trees and shrubs, and beautiful flowers; why, it seems to me these things must tend to make home pleasant."

"You are right, Mrs. Gove; we feel that by cultivating a taste for the beautiful in nature, we improve the character and soften the heart."

"I know you are right, and not for my sake, but on Billy's account, I wish I could make Mr. Gove think as we do. But perhaps I do wrong to speak in this way, for Mr. Gove has more care now than any one man ought to have, and I know that he has no time for anything but barely to take care of what he has, without making any improvements. But I am in hopes when William grows up, that he will get time to set trees

and make our home pleasant, for a more ardent lover of nature I surely never saw."

"Mrs. Gove, of course your husband knows his own business, but I've often thought that it would be for your interest all round, if your husband had less land to care for. I mean, if he would sell some, it certainly would lessen his care as well as your own."

"Perhaps so, but really Mr. Gove doesn't think it looks just right for a man to part with property which has been handed down from father to son, until it is now in the fourth generation. 'Tis true I have a good deal of care, and must work hard, but I have no reason to complain, though 'twould be very nice, what little time I have to sew, to sit in such a cool, delightful place as this. Perhaps I'm all wrong, and think too much of these things."

Mrs. Gove was returning from the visit to her neighbor, which they had mutually enjoyed, when a pat on the shoulder caused her to exclaim, "Are you tired, Billy?" as she gazed earnestly at that pale face, and sought to read the language of those dark and handsome eyes. "Are you tired, my dear?"

"Yes, mother, O, I am very tired; for don't you think after I had helped father as long as he had any thing for me to do, I went into that pretty grove where sis and I played the week before she died, and there, right by a little mossy bank, was a little larch tree; and, mother, I wanted very much to dig it up and bring it home, and set it out by your bed-room window. I am sure, mother, it would look beautifully there, and then I never should see it without thinking of little Alice."

"Did your father take it up for you?" said Mrs. Gove, as she strove to force back the tears that would come.

"No, mother; I took the spade and tried: I dug all around it, but I couldn't start it a bit, when I tried to pull it up, and then I asked father if he would let Mike take it up for me. You know, mother, that Mike is a good hand, for he helped take up and set out all Mr. Norton's trees."

"And what did your father say, my dear?"

"He said, 'don't be so foolish, child—we've no time to fool away,' or something of that kind. I wish I had strength to pull it up; but I don't know as father would let me set it out. Do you think it is foolish, mother?"

"My dear child, your father has a great deal of care and anxiety, and you heard him say this morning, when the man called to tell him his fence all lay flat, and everybody's cattle were in, that his work was driving him continually; so perhaps father thought 'twould be wrong to spend the time that is now so precious to us, in doing what we could get along without doing."

"Well, mother, does father take much comfort? He is always behindhand, and he never finishes all the jobs he begins. Why, don't you know last summer we had so much to do that we did not get time to hoe that piece of corn between the woods, and I heard father say myself, that it did not begin to pay for the plowing. And, mother, you know I heard it talked over at the store, how

father had to pay for that strip of land he bought of Mr. Chase, twice, because he did not get time to make the deed, and Mr. Chase died before 'twas done. When I hear people say to father, 'you are the richest man in town,' or, 'you own the most land,' why, I think, well, I don't see as father is any happier than the neighbors, that haven't half as much. Why, I heard father say to-day that he was harassed to death."

The night after the above conversation, as Billy was quietly sleeping, and Mr. Gove sat with his arms folded, and his eyes resting on the wall, Mrs. Gove asked her husband, in rather a timid tone, if he had noticed how fully Mr. Norton's fruit trees had blown.

"Well, I believe I saw them, or heard some one speak of it. But I am tired."

"Yes, I think you must be; you've worked hard all day."

"I have worked like a dog, and what does it amount to?"

"Do you think," said his wife, "considering we have to work so hard and hire so much help, that it is for your interest to keep all the land?"

"Think—I don't think any thing about it. I've got it, and I must take care of it. I should look well spending what has so long been in the family. As long as property is in land it is safe; but change it into money, or any thing else, and ten to one 'tis soon gone, nobody knows where."

"Perhaps you are right; but it seems to me you could take much better care of less, make it more profitable, and at the same time relieve yourself of this care and anxiety, which I fear is wearing upon you. And then you know William is slender. I don't think he'll ever be able to work as hard as you have done."

"He never will, if he is brought up to think he is too good to work. He has notions in his head now, that I fancy will do him no good. You have been over to Norton's this afternoon. I suppose his wife advised you what was best for us to do. —Why, Betsey, can't you see through it all? They have been and sold half of their farm, and laid out the money in trees, and I don't know what all,—sent the boys to school instead of teaching them to work, and so she wants us to do the same.—Ha! ha! misery likes company. The long and short of it is, Betsey, Mrs. Norton wanted to get rid of work. I wish they had sold the whole concern and cleared out, for I see plainly you nor William can go over there, but it bewitches you. No—you will never see me covering my land, or surrounding my house with *boughten* trees. If I had time I should like well enough to set out a maple or something near the house. I should like one or two for the horses to stand under, but I havn't the time, neither do I think it best to encourage any such notions in the boy. You know how it is—if you give an inch they'll take an ell." He begged hard for us to dig up a larch this afternoon, but indulgence will spoil any child. If I had done that for him, why he would only have wanted more, and if he got too many such notions, why he is headstrong, and the first we should know he would be off like others we know of. No; the only way to get along with children is to be *strict*; no arguing

with them, and no giving way to their foolish wants."

"Do you think it was indulgence that made George White go to New York? I don't know but what it might be, his mother was dreadful careful of him."

"I should like to know what 'tis makes boys leave their father's homes and farms, and go off to the city, and barely get their board, if it isn't letting them have their will and way."

"I have no doubt that over-indulgence begets self-will, and overcomes a child's sense of duty, so that restraint is thrown off, and parental obligation disregarded; but, husband, I do believe one thing, and that is, if we wish Willey to love his home, we must make it happy; if we wish his warmest affections to cluster around this place, we must it attractive. You think the Norton boys are indulged too much, but this indulgence is nothing more than a desire on the parents' part, judiciously carried out, to make them useful and happy. And I believe they take the right course. No children love their home better than they do. Mrs. N. tells me that it is with the greatest reluctance that they leave home in the vacation, to visit their cousins in the city."

"Well, well, don't say any more, for I have as much I can do to get through the day's work, and I for one want to sleep in the night! Mrs. Norton is welcome to her notions, and I will have mine!"

While Mr. G. is wrapped in the "sweet sleep of the laboring man," and Mrs. G. is revolving in her own mind the many different plans which suggest themselves to a mother's ever watchful heart, for the good of her boy, let us take a peep at the character of both parents and child.

Had a stranger inquired of almost any one in N., "what sort of a man is Mr. Gove?" the answer would probably be to this effect: "Fine man, sir, upright, honest and firm; *trifles* don't move him." Granted—but let us see if there can be, with these good qualities, nothing wanting.

Mr. G. was stern; in his view, the "smoothing over" of an affair was never advisable. Billy, as a child, had much to contend with in the way of passion, pride, and self-will; like almost all children, occasional acts of thoughtlessness and hasty impulse led him into error and its painful consequences. Had his father been careful to "do justice to his better qualities, while at the same time he blamed and convinced him of his faults," all might have been well; but Mr. G. never met his errors in "love and conquered them by forgiveness." Unjust harshness actually confirmed him in error. Mr. G. was spoken of as a generous man, but to use the beautiful language of one departed, "There are those who are lavish in attention and presents to friends, but who never imagine that their own home circle has the first and strongest claim to kindness, whether of word or deed. Affections and thoughts lavished on comparative strangers never radiate on home; but when given to home first, they shed light and kindness far and near." Mr. G. never won the heart of his child. How was it with the mother? She possessed the rare combination of "gentleness with firmness, submissiveness with dignity." Her anxious desire was to do justice to his better

feelings, and while she wished to educate his mind, she was more anxious that his heart should be won and taught.

But little change, outwardly, was visible in the Gove family when William had reached his eighteenth year. The homestead remained the same—save some marks which “Time’s effacing fingers” had not failed to make. The “ash tree,” by the spring, was gone, and the maple “for the horse to stand under,” had never been “set out.”

One fine morning in May, William asked his father if he might have the sorrel horse to go to the village adjoining. Permission was given on condition that he would return before dinner. Dinner came, and with it came William.

“What has our William been doing!” exclaimed Mr. Gove, as he gave a hasty glance at the window. “Cutting wagon load of withes.”

“I don’t know, but I can’t see very well without my glasses.”

‘Twas easy to see, however, that that hasty glance had ruffled the smooth current of his thoughts, for he at once knew that withes needed no roots. William took out the horse, wheeled the wagon into the shed, and entering the long kitchen, seated himself at the table. The mother, with her quick perception, failed not to understand why that shadow rested upon the father’s brow. Hardly a word was spoken—Mr. G., upon leaving the table, took up a newspaper, a thing which he rarely had time to do; it was evident to Billy, however, that he was not reading very intently, for the paper was upside down. When William left the house, he went directly for the spade and hoe, and walking deliberately down the hillside, south of the house, commenced making holes twelve feet apart, where he had helped his father plow the day before. He had thus been engaged half an hour, when, rising to wipe the heavy drops of moisture from his forehead, he saw his father looking earnestly at him.

“What are you doing, William?”

“I am fixing places to set out trees!”

“What kind of trees?”

“Peach and pear trees, sir.”

“Where did you get them?”

“I bought them at a tree auction to-day.”

“You did! Well, you can’t set them, here, sir.”

“I can’t—what’s the reason?”

“There are reasons enough, though I’m under no obligations to tell children; yet I won’t be particular this time. In the first place, I wish you to understand once for all, that you take one step too far when you buy trees without leave or license, and more than that, proceed deliberately to put them on my best corn land. And now you can do what you please with the trees. You have taken far too much liberty. You shall never set them on my land.”

Without one word, William shouldered his spade and walked to the house. His mother, who stood at the corner-window, although she had heard no word spoken, understood the whole affair perfectly. She saw William shoulder the spade, and then her heart beat heavily, but quickly raising the corner of her apron, she wiped away the tears which were fast falling, and met her son with a smile.

“Well, mother, I’ve done,” said he, as he sunk down on the old kitchen chair, “I’ve done trying to be anything here. *He* won’t let me be anybody!”

“My child, don’t speak so disrespectfully of your father. *He*, Billy, that sounds dreadfully; never say *that* again, my son.”

“I can’t help it, mother, I shan’t stay here. You know what I told you, last week, mother, and to-day I have had something come across my feelings, harder to bear than all. When I was coming from the village, I met a man with a double wagon, and a beautiful larch tree in it. I was hoping to buy it, so I asked him where he got it. ‘Squire Gove gave it to me,’ he replied. ‘O, mother, wasn’t that too much?’ I asked him who took it up, and he said his Irishman, that he called Mike. I could have torn that tree in splinters, mother. I rode round by the grove, and sure enough ‘twas gone, and the mossy seat all trampled and torn. Do you think after that I would ask him to let me set out the trees? No, mother, if father can do without me, I can do without him. I shall go away as soon as you can get my things ready. Of course, the folks will say—‘What an ungrateful boy to leave his father alone;’ but why can’t father try to please me as well as others—as well as strangers? There are the Norton boys—if father had done one-quarter for me that their father has done for them, I should be very, very happy. O, mother, don’t feel so bad—you must not blame me. I know you are a real Christian, mother, but I aint like you—you overlook, and forgive everything. I am some like father; I wish I was just like you.”

William expected his mother would entreat him to stay at home, but no, not one word did she say in favor of it. She knew these were little things to cause the boy to leave the home of his youth for a home among strangers, but she knew also that the joys and griefs at home are almost all made up of little, very little things.

We will hasten over the particulars of William’s leaving home, and only say that his father’s parting words were, “I can do without you as long as you can without me, William.” In four weeks from this leave-taking, William was a sort of waiter on board a Mississippi steam-boat.

Mr. Gove hired an extra hand:—many people shook their heads meaningly, and said it was a pity, a great pity, but nothing new or strange, for an only child to be spoiled by indulgence; but then, he was a pretty, bright boy, and they supposed it came hard to punish him; but “Spare the rod and spoil the child,” was Scripture.

The summer was passed, the golden grain was garnered, and the rich fruits secured, when Mr. Gove, who had grown somewhat moody of late, called Mike to the back door, and giving him some directions, took his hat, and passing out the other door, joined him.

“Let me see, you have the spade and hoe. Well, now, come down with me to the side of the hill where the early corn was planted, and do you remember where the holes were, that William made last spring?”

“And sure ‘tis not me that’s a’thur forgatting

sich things, for didn't I put a flat stone by every hite of 'um; and didn't I in hoing and harvest keep them from being shoved a bit? For do you mind, sir, I set a dale by the boy—he wouldn't hurt a baste, sir, and his heart is as big as a whale."

"Well, well, that's enough, Mike. Now, you bring all the trees you buried in the swamp, and set them out just as you did Norton's, and do you know which were the trees designed for the holes William had opened?"

"And faith I mind it well, for didn't I tie a string round 'um, and lay 'um jes so?"

"Well, set them right, and when you have done them, call me from the house."

Mr. G. took the arm-chair, and moving it to the bed-room window, seemed lost in thought. Surely, he must be sick, for he never was known to sit down of a week-day except at meal times.

Two hours passed, and Mike was passing the window, when he was thus accosted by Mr. G.: "Have you done, Mike?"

"Sure, sir, a plasant job to me, I was lazy to quat it."

"Now take your spade, and prepare a place by this window, where you see I've placed the stick, for a larger tree. Now, if you have it right, go over to Capt. Burns', and ask him if he will sell me that larch tree in the west corner of his birch lot. Tell him the price is no object, and be careful you don't break any of the small roots; be very careful, Mike."

"No fear o' that, sir."

"Stop, that is not all. When you come home, call at Smith's and tell him I have concluded to let him have the land, and tell him to come over, this afternoon, and Squire Norton will be here to fix the writings. Tell all who inquire for me that I am sick."

Before night, one-third of Mr. Gove's land was in Mr. Smith's possession, and the deeds on record. The larch seemed quite at home by the bed-room window.

And, now, what strange spell was this upon Mr. Gove.

"O, there are moments in our life
When but a thought, a word, a look has power,
To wrest the cup of happiness aside,
And stamp us wretched!"

The evening before, Mr. G. chanced to take up a school book of William's, and on a blank leaf were written, in a neat school-boy hand, these simple lines:—

" 'Tis the last blooming summer these eyes shall behold;
Long, long ere another, this heart shall be cold:
For O, its warm feelings on earth have been chilled,
And I grieve not that shortly its pulse will be stilled."

Mr. G. dropped the book, and wandered, he hardly knew whither, till he found himself in the swamp where William's trees were buried. What followed, the reader already knows.

Mrs. G. had finished her day's work, and was seating herself in the little rocking chair, when Mr. G. called to her from the bed-room.

"Betsey, will you sit in here? I want you to write a letter to William, to-night."

"To-night! Why it is after nine o'clock!"

"I know it, but I shall feel better if it is done to-night. I feel sick all over, and perhaps I am nervous."

"I will write what you wish me to, my dear husband."

"O, don't say so—but tell Billy I wish him to come home without delay; tell him for the love he bears his mother, and for the love I bear him, to come now. Say that my hand trembles so, I can't write this, but I say it from my inmost heart."

Mrs. G., with an overflowing heart, quickly performed the delightful task.

"And, now, Betsey, I will try to ask God to watch over that boy, and to soften my own proud heart."

"O! when the heart is full—when bitter thoughts
Come crowding thickly up for utterance,
And the poor common words of courtesy
Are such a very mockery—how much
The bursting heart may pour itself in prayer."

June, beautiful June, the "month of roses," found Mr. G. in that "old arm chair," by the bedroom window, but O, how changed!

"His hair was thin, and on his brow
A record of the cares of many a year,
Cares that were ended and forgotten now."

It was the last day of his earthly existence. The gentle breeze, as it swept through the light foliage of that beautiful larch, caused him to open those eyes so soon to be closed for ever—and as they met, for the last time on earth, those of his own Billy, upon whose arm his head rested, he whispered, "I die happy now," and the scene of life had closed.